

who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people. I ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama, that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people.

And I will say three times, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

#### ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE: HOPE IN MEDELLIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, at the end of August, I was part of a weeklong fact-finding delegation to Colombia coordinated by the Washington Office on Latin America.

Our first stop was in Medellin. Hailed during 2005 to 2008 as the so-called "Medellin Miracle," we now know that the miracle was more illusion than reality, created by the iron fist of paramilitary leader Diego Murillo, alias Don Berna. He controlled all criminal activity in the poorest districts, or comunas, as they're known, that surround central Medellin. Since his 2008 extradition to the United States, hell has returned to the comunas, as neo-paramilitary drug lords fight for control of drug trafficking, extortion, and other criminal activity.

But the "miracle" wasn't a total illusion. During those years of relative calm, the municipal government, under Mayor Sergio Fajardo, and his successor, current Mayor Alonso Salazar, made significant investments in youth organizations, education, and basic human services in the poorest neighborhoods. In greater Medellin, investments resulted in public parks, recreational spaces, culture, and a new public transit system. These changes, large and small, have helped civil society to better weather and confront the current explosion of violence that keeps Medellin in the ranks of Latin America's most violent cities.

There are an estimated 3,800 or more gang members in Medellin. And about 70 percent of their ranks are made up of young people between the ages of 11 and 17. In the past 2 years, nearly 2,000 young people between the ages of 11 and 25 have been killed.

We spent an entire day meeting with people and youth organizations in three of the city's most violent districts, Comunas 13, 8, and 5. Our guides were the dedicated staff of Fundacion Mi Sangre. They introduced us to John Jaime Sanchez, the director of Son Bata, an Afro-Colombian group that has achieved international fame by using music to help Comuna 13's young people find alternatives to violence.

We visited a local YMCA and its director, Alexandra Castillon. The YMCA has long served as an anchor and neu-

tral space in Comuna 13. There we met leaders from Hip Hop Red Elite, Hip Hoppers for Peace, and the Kolacho School, a music training school named in memory of a young boy killed in Comuna 13. The groups reach young people through the use of music and dance, helping them become leaders. These youth then use their art to reach others in their schools and on the streets with the message of non-violence.

We went across town to Casa de la Cultura, one of the few neutral spaces in Comuna 8.

□ 1020

We met students in youth groups called Diafora, La Villa, AK-47, New Dance and others. Their determination and enthusiasm to create a better future were undeniable. Rap group AK-47 joined with students playing classical music. They put on a stunning rap program against gang violence. I could have listened to their powerful words and music all day.

We ended the day sitting on the ground above a small park in Comuna 5 talking with more than 20 youth leaders about their daily lives and how they use art to promote human rights, recapture historic memory, and create a better community. I told them they should run for office because Medellin's future depended on their leadership.

The next day, our delegation returned to Comuna 5, this time with the Catholic Church and the mayor's adviser on peace and reconciliation. We met former and current gang members. We heard impassioned stories about how they want to leave the gangs and the endless violence. It's not an easy choice. They fear retaliation and not being able to support their families.

Many people in Medellin are helping them lay down their arms, but their futures are dangerous and limited. They also lack confidence in the police, some of whom are allied with one faction or another in the gang wars.

These youth put themselves at risk for advocating alternatives to violence and envisioning a future far different from the reality that surrounds them. They deserve our respect and our support—not just with funding but by increasing their visibility and their legitimacy.

Rarely on my trips to Colombia have I left the place with such strong and positive feelings; and after spending time in the most dangerous areas of the city, I came away with a sense of hope.

I often speak of what's going wrong in Colombia and the many problems that need to be addressed. In Medellin I found many examples of what is going right.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

#### PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Leroy Adams, Jr., Morning Star Baptist Church, Omaha, Nebraska, offered the following prayer:

Our God, we come with gratitude for another day and with thanksgiving in our hearts for the privilege of life and the opportunity to make this day purposeful.

We ask for Your blessings to this legislative body as they govern the welfare of all people of this great Nation. Endow them with wisdom, discernment, courage, and conviction to engage the issues of our day and for the generations to come to be better off as a result of all decisions made within this assembly hall.

Finally, I pray to You that a spirit of cooperation and sincerity would transcend our Nation to have solidarity, peace, and equality for all.

We ask this to be done this day and in the days to come to give glory and honor to You, our God, and we pray that Your blessings be upon us always.

In Your name, we pray. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### WELCOMING REVEREND DR. LEROY ADAMS, JR.

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

(Mr. TERRY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize our guest chaplain, my fellow Nebraskan and friend, Reverend Dr. Leroy E. Adams, Jr., who has served as the senior pastor of Omaha's